

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received SEP 26 1986

date entered NOV 4 1986

1. Name

historic Gay Street Commercial Historic District

and/or common Same

2. Location

roughly along Gay Street from Summit
street & number Hill Drive to Church Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Knox code 093

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Knox County Courthouse (City/County Building)

street & number 400 Main Avenue

city, town Knoxville state Tennessee

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date N/A N/A federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Gay Street Commercial Historic District contains forty-five buildings and one object, centered on Gay Street in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee. Of the forty-six listed properties, ten are non-contributing at this time; two are new buildings, and only two have irreversible changes. The remainder have been altered by facade panels, which appear to be removable. Two vacant lots are included within the boundaries of the district. The buildings are located along four blocks of Gay Street and one block of State Street, which is one block east of Gay Street. The majority of the buildings are either in office or retail use, although vacant buildings and two theaters are also included in the district. The object in the district is a cast iron street clock. The buildings date from 1870s to the 1930s and exhibit Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, vernacular, and Art Deco architectural influences. Most of the buildings are rectangular in shape and of brick construction. Terra cotta facades and trim, stone, cast iron, and metal cornices are in evidence on the buildings, which range in height from one to fourteen stories. Although alterations have occurred to many of the storefronts, the majority of the upper stories retain their architectural detailing. The factors of size and scale, combined with materials used in construction, set the district apart as an area retaining its original architectural and historic integrity.

The proposed district is the historic commercial and retail heart of Knoxville. The buildings within its boundaries were built to house such uses as furniture stores, pharmacies, department stores, and banks. Hotels, theaters, residential apartments, offices, and a newspaper were also located in the district. At the northern end of Gay Street are buildings which housed several warehouse and light manufacturing companies. These buildings date from the 1880s and 1890s and are four to six stories high. On the ground floor of many of the buildings were retail outlets. The Union National Bank, located in a 1910 building at Gay Street and Commerce Avenue (now Summit Hill) served the financial needs of these businesses. To the south, on the east side of Gay Street, were other late 19th century buildings housing retail and wholesale outlets. Marked by brick construction, terra cotta and stone trim, and heavy metal cornices, these buildings form an entrance to the Gay Street Commercial Historic District. On the west side of Gay Street are brick buildings of similar scale, mass, and construction, built to house saloons, stores, and other retail functions. Together, the businesses in this block provide a transition between the Market Square Commercial Historic District (NR-1984) to the west, with its local market function, and the Southern Terminal and Warehouse Historic District (NR-1985) to the north, with its region-wide wholesaling function. The architecture of the buildings provides a similar transition in size and construction.

Most of the buildings in the remainder of this district are somewhat newer and reflective of early 20th century architectural styles. Their brick construction and stone trim blend well with the northernmost structures. Original uses included hotels and offices, apartments, cafeterias, and saloons, banks, and the Tennessee Theater (NR-1983). Several of these buildings are listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. These individual listings include the Cowan-McClung Building (NR-1984) at 500 South Gay Street,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet	Gay Street Commercial Historic District	Item number	7	Page	2
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the Burwell Building (NR-1983) at 612 South Gay Street, the Holston National Bank (NR-1979) at 531 South Gay Street, and the Dr. S. M. Miller Building (NR-1983) at 209 West Church Street. Also included in this nomination are the Whitfield Flats and Offices (1906-1907) and the Glenco Flats (1905), both good examples of urban residential and office structures.

Although storefront alterations have occurred to some buildings, the Gay Street Commercial Historic District presents a unique picture of the architecture and commercial life of Knoxville in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The district contains 35 contributing buildings and one contributing object, ten non-contributing buildings, and two vacant lots. Contributing buildings and objects (C) are significant to the district and illustrate the historic and architectural evolution of the area, possess compatible design elements, and maintain the scale, use, and texture of the district. Non-contributing buildings (N) may disrupt the texture of the district, have little or no architectural or historical significance, or may have been substantially altered. The forty-five buildings and one object which comprise this district are listed below by street address.

Church Street

1. 201 West Church Street - The Whitfield (1906). Classical Revival, three story plus basement, yellow brick. Front (south) elevation divided into three bays by bay windows which flank central entry porticos. Stone lintels and sills over jack arch windows. Side (east) elevation has segmental arched windows. Heavy cornice topped by parapet at front elevation. Flat roof. (C)
2. 209 West Church Street - Dr. S.M. Miller Building (1900 - NR-1983). Victorian Vernacular with Romanesque Revival influences, three story brick with quarry faced ashlar on front facade. Jack arch windows. Arch with stylized floral motif and chiseled number "209" on impost return marks recessed first story entry. Marble entablature below heavy cornice. One bay. Flat roof. (C)
3. 211 West Church Street - Knoxville Journal and Tribune Press Room (1924). Vernacular Commercial, two story brick with single loading dock at front elevation first floor. Double door flanked by windows at second floor. One bay. Flat roof. (C)

Gay Street

4. 300 South Gay Street - Union National Bank (1910-1911). Classical Revival, three story, brick with dressed limestone front elevation and cornice, belt course and quoins dividing four bays on north elevation. Two bays and offset entry on front elevation. One over one windows with transoms at front. Flat roof. Front elevation storefronts altered. (C)
5. 304 South Gay Street - (C. 1950). Two story brick veneer. Altered. (N)

Vacant lot.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
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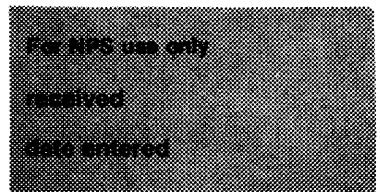
Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 7 Page 3

6. 312-314 South Gay Street - Haynes-Henson (Century) Building (1886). Victorian Vernacular Commercial with Romanesque and Eastlake influences, five story, brick with terra cotta ornamentation, dressed limestone belt courses and key stones. Two bays. One over one windows paired in sets of three with stained glass transoms on second, third, and fourth floors. Middle windows of each set in second and third floors segmentally arched, on fourth floor all windows full arched, on fifth floor jack arch windows. Pressed cornice and brackets. Flat roof. Storefronts altered, but original materials still remain. (C)
7. 316 South Gay Street - George Cowan Building (1889). Vernacular Commercial, four story, brick with paired pilasters separating third story windows. One over one windows. Heavy pressed metal cornice at top of fourth floor topped by arched, corbeled brick cornice. Two bays. Flat roof. Altered storefront. (C)

Vacant Lot
8. 401 South Gay Street - C. F. Johnson Saloon (C. 1877). Italianate Commercial, two story brick with corbeling, heavy bracketed pressed metal cornice. Windows altered. Two bays on front elevation, four bays on north (side) elevation. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
9. 402 South Gay Street - McNulty Grocery and Dry Goods Co. (1898). Vernacular Commercial, four story, brick with applied belt courses at top of first and second floor windows, quarry faced ashlar sills at second, third, and fourth story windows and lintels at third story windows. Four bays with three one over one windows at third and fourth stories and Chicago style windows at second story. Flat roof. Alterations include storefront changes and removal of a pierced parapet wall. (C)
10. 403 South Gay Street - Gay Theater (1910). Colonial Revival, two story brick with pressed metal cornice, arched multi-paned windows at second story, dressed limestone quoins and window sills. One bay. Mansard roof. Storefront altered. (C)
11. 410 South Gay Street - Newcomer's Pharmacy (1906). Classical Revival, three story brick with detailing separating second and third story windows, pediment above third story. Single bay with bay windows at second and third stories with one over one windows. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
12. 411 South Gay Street - Commercial, date unknown, three story brick, substantially and irreversibly altered. Flat roof. (N)
13. 412 South Gay Street - Sterchi Bros. Furniture (1898). Four story brick. Applied panels conceal details of front elevation. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (N)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historical District Item number 7 Page 4

14. 413 South Gay Street - Commercial, two story brick,(C. 1900). Front elevation covered with large panels, storefront altered. Flat roof. (N)
15. 415 South Gay Street - Vernacular Commercial (C. 1910). Two story brick with pressed metal cornice. Panels applied to front facade obscure architectural details. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (N)
16. 418 South Gay Street - Cullen & Newman Queensware Building (1899). Classical Revival, six story, brick with Ionic and Doric engaged columns defining bays and separating windows, pressed metal cornice and brackets, applied decorative elements between third and fourth stories. Two bays. One over one windows with transoms. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
17. 422 South Gay Street - (1913). Romanesque Revival, four story brick with stone covering front facade. Stone cornices above third and fourth stories. One over one windows have jack arch lintels on second and fourth stories, with paired windows at fourth story, arched windows at third story. Pilasters at fourth story. Three bays. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
18. 417-421 South Gay Street - Kress Building (C. 1925). Art Deco, three story brick. Terra cotta ornamentation on facade with quatrefoils, cartouches and other embellishments. Kress name inset at top of building. One over one windows with pilasters dividing facade into three bays. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
19. 423 South Gay Street - Miller's Building (C.1930), seven story brick building. Facade obscured by glass panels, but details appear fairly intact behind panels. (N)
20. 424 South Gay Street - W. W. Woodruff Hardware Co. Building (1905). Classical Revival, five story, brick. Heavy pressed metal, bracketed cornice. Ionic pilasters separate windows. Two bays. One over one windows with round arched transoms at fifth floor. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
21. Street Clock at 428 South Gay Street - (1915). Cast iron street clock with squared base with recessed panels narrowing to fluted column which supports a squared base with acanthus leaves directly under clock. Arabic numerals, two faces bearing name of "Kimball's," which is jewelry store that installed clock. (C)
22. 428 South Gay Street - Arnold, Henegar, Doyle & Co. Building (1898). Vernacular Victorian Commercial with Romanesque Revival influences, five story brick with corbeling at cornice, stone trim. One over one windows with transoms and arches over windows at fourth floor. Tripled windows at fifth floor. Two bays. Storefront altered. (C)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered

Continuation sheet	Gay Street Commercial Historic District	Item number	7	Page	5
--------------------	--	-------------	---	------	---

23. 430 South Gay Street - Sanford, Chamberlain & Albers Company (1870, C. 1910). Vernacular Commercial, three story brick with metal cornice at front elevation. South elevation reflects 1870 construction with segmental arched windows, quoins separating bays. Front elevation altered c. 1910 with Chicago style windows at second story. One over one windows throughout. One bay. Storefront altered. (C)
24. 439 South Gay Street - Miller's Building (1905). Seven story brick with terra cotta ornamentation at cornice, on belt courses, and on pilasters dividing six bays of front elevation. Chicago style windows. Flat roof. Front and side elevations now obscured by application of glass panels, but details appear fairly intact behind panels. (N)
25. 500-504 South Gay Street - Cowan, McClung and Company Building (1871, 1929, NR-1984). Second Renaissance Revival, four story brick with dressed ashlar applied to the first story of front elevation in 1929. Bays on north elevation show original Italianate detailing except for westernmost bay, also altered in 1929. Dentiled cornice, frieze of garlands and eagles, and second story voussoirs on front (west) elevation. Three front bays. Flat roof. (C)
26. 506 South Gay Street - Walgreen Building (1938). Art Deco, one story brick with stone front facade. Fluted pilasters divide three bay facade; bas-relief mortar and pestle on end bays. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
27. 510 South Gay Street - Riviera Theatre (1920). Art Deco, two story brick with corbeled cornice, projecting engaged columns. Chicago window in central of three bays, flanked by two smaller windows. Vertical mullions divide top side, and all windows are topped by transoms divided vertically. Flat roof. Altered storefront. (C)
28. 514 South Gay Street - Gant Ogden Stationers Building (1913). Vernacular Commercial, two story brick with parapet, pressed tin cornice and dentiled string course. Transoms over second story windows. One bay. Flat roof. Altered storefront. (C)
29. 516-518 South Gay Street - S & W Cafeteria Building (1936). Art Deco, two story brick with multichrome terra cotta facade of cream and turquoise. Jack arch central window covered by grid-pattern grill in gold. Cornice also gold. Storefront with wooden doors with large central panel and kick panels of polished black stone. Interior retains paneling, circular staircases and walkway with wrought iron railings. One bay. Flat roof. (C)
30. 520 South Gay Street - Athletic House (1923). Vernacular Commercial, two story brick with stone lintels above second story windows and dentiled stone cornice. Transoms over second story windows. One bay. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered

Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 7 Page 6

31. 522 South Gay Street - Central House Hotel (1875). Italianate, three story brick with pressed tin cornice and window hoods above third story windows. Corbeled brick cornice. One bay. Flat roof. Second story windows and storefront altered. (C)
32. 524 South Gay Street - (1875). Vernacular Commercial, two story brick which was original entrance to Central House Hotel to the north. Flat roof. Altered in the 1950s by applied panels at second story. Altered storefront. (N)
33. 525-527 South Gay Street - (C. 1950). Two story brick veneer attached to 531 South Gay Street. (N)
34. 526-530 South Gay Street - Farragut Hotel (1917). Vernacular Commercial with Beaux Arts influence, nine story reinforced concrete with brick and terra cotta exterior. Terra cotta ornamentation at eighth and ninth floors with wrought iron balconies at ninth floor windows. Terra cotta sills and cartouches with flagpoles above third floor. Three bays. Flat roof. Windows altered by replacement with single pane glass. Storefront altered. (C)
35. 531 South Gay Street - Holston National Bank (1912-1913; 1928, NR-1979). Classical Revival, fourteen story brick with marble cladding first, second and third stories. Fluted engaged columns on east (front) and south (side) elevations. Cornice above second, third, seventh, and fourteenth floors. Flat roof. Alterations include some window frames and door replacement. (C)
36. 600 South Gay Street - Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater (1907-1908; 1928, NR-1983). Second Renaissance Revival, building complex including ten story brick office building organized in three divisions with belt courses and terra cotta ornamentation. Two bays at the front (west elevation) and seven bays at the side (north elevation). Theater marquee dominates the southernmost front bay. Flat roof. Unaltered. (C)
37. 601 South Gay Street - Fouche Block (1875-76). Victorian Vernacular Commercial, two story brick. Corbeled brick under pressed tin cornice with brackets. Segmental arched windows at front (east) elevation outside bays, jack arch window at central bay. Three bays at east (front) elevation, and seven at side (north) elevation with central stair. Flat roof. Storefronts altered. (C)
38. 607-609 South Gay Street - 1875 Building (1875). Victorian Vernacular Commercial, two story brick with pressed tin cornice. Three bays with jack arch windows on outside bays flanking central bay with arched windows and pressed tin window hoods which houses stair. Flat roof. Storefronts and second story windows in northern bay altered. (C)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
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Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 7 Page 7

39. 608-610 South Gay Street - (1880). Romanesque Revival, two story brick with corbeled cornice, dressed ashlar storefront and arched second story window surrounds. Two bays. Flat roof. Altered by application of pierced masonry screen on front facade; original details visible and intact behind screen. (N)
40. 612 South Gay Street - Mechanics Bank and Trust Company Building (1870; 1923, NR-1983). Second Renaissance Revival, five story brick and marble, with engaged columns with Ionic capitals flanking the first floor entry. Pilasters mark slightly recessed windows of bay, central console brackets flanking a cartouche. Three bays. Flat roof. Unaltered. (C)
41. 618-620 South Gay Street - Knoxville Journal & Tribune Arcade (1924). Classical Revival, two story brick with front elevation clad in stone. Engaged fluted columns capped by acanthus leaf capitals divide front elevation into five bays. Central entryway marked by a cornice supported by console brackets. Entablature with projecting dentiled cornice above second story windows, parapet roof. Flat roof. Storefronts altered at first and second story. (C)

State Street

42. 311-313 State Street - Cal Johnson Building (1898). Vernacular Commercial, three story brick with pressed metal cornice supported by corbeling, segmental arched windows. Two bays with oversize loading doors at first story. (C)
43. 615 State Street - The Glencoe (1905). Classical Revival, three story brick with end bay windows flanking recessed central entries at each floor, marked by Ionic capitals. Heavy cornice topped by parapet. Two bays. Flat roof. (C)

Summit Hill Drive

44. 200-202 Summit Hill Drive - McTeers, Payne, Burgen & Hood Building (1888). Victorian Vernacular Commercial, five story brick with arched windows at fifth story and jack arch windows with transoms at second through fourth stories. Two bays. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)
45. 204 Summit Hill Drive - George Brown Building (1889). Victorian Vernacular Commercial, four story brick with dressed limestone sills. Pilasters divide facade into two bays. Corbeled brick at cornice. Flat roof. Transom over altered storefront, windows covered. (C)
46. 206 Summit Hill Drive - Butt, Cox & Young Building (1889). Victorian Vernacular Commercial, four story brick. Transoms over second and third story windows with pilasters with terra cotta capitals dividing storefront into two bays. Heavy pressed tin cornice below arched fourth story windows with terra cotta hoods. Corbeled brick and terra cotta hoods. Flat roof. Storefront altered. (C)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1870–1938 **Builder/Architect** Multiple

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Gay Street Commercial Historic District is being nominated under National Register criteria A and C for its historical and architectural significance in Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee. The district reflects the social, architectural, and economic evolution of Knoxville from the post-Civil War period until the onset of World War II. Architecturally, the district mirrors design changes occurring at the national level and contains some of the best local examples of these styles. Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Art Deco buildings embellished with stone, brick, and terra cotta trim are well represented in the district. With various building uses, including theaters, drug stores, banks, and retail stores, the district reflects the economic development of Knoxville. In addition, the Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater (NR-1979), S and W Cafeteria, and Walgreen's Building were social centers for area businessmen. While many of the storefronts have been altered, overall, the Gay Street Commercial Historic District retains its integrity.

After the Civil War, Knoxville began its rise to prominence as a major Southern commercial center. The most important factor in this development was probably rail transportation, but, in addition, Knoxville attracted many northerners who were willing to move to Knoxville and invest in the city. In 1867, Cowan, McClung, and Company, whose building still stands at 500 South Gay Street (NR-1984), was the state's largest taxpayer. The Haynes-Henson Shoe Company (312-314 South Gay Street) was noted as the "\$1 million shoe company" by 1894. Other Gay Street businesses like Woodruff's (424 South Gay Street) and Sanford, Chamberlain, Albers (430 South Gay Street) added to the importance of the Street in the city's and region's commercial life.

The buildings in this district portray the retail and commercial life of the city from the 1870s to the 1930s. For example, included in the inventory are the C. F. Johnson Saloon and the Cal Johnson Building. Cal Johnson was a black businessman who typified the increasingly affluent black middle-class Knoxvillian in the late 19th century. There were also hotels, saloons, furniture, and dry good stores, book dealers, pharmacies, and tobacconists in the area. Represented in the district are many of Knoxville's first banks, which after the 1890s and until the Great Depression numbered six. Buildings built for the banks, such as Hamilton Bank Building at 531 South Gay Street (NR-1979) and the Mechanics Bank & Trust Company Building (NR-1983, Old City Club) at 612 South Gay Street, still indicate this prominence and the prosperity of Knoxville.

Also included in the district are two early 20th century apartment buildings, the Whitfield at 201 West Church Street and the Glencoe at 615 State Street. In addition to their Classical Revival architecture, these buildings illustrate the importance of downtown as a residential area.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 13 acres

Quadrangle name Knoxville, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 1 7 2 3 6 8 0 0 3 9 8 4 1 1 0
Zone Easting Northing

B 1 7 2 3 7 0 0 0 3 9 8 3 6 7 0
Zone Easting Northing

C 1 7 2 3 6 8 6 0 3 9 8 3 6 2 0

D 1 7 2 3 6 6 5 0 3 9 8 4 0 6 0

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ann K. Bennett, Planner

organization Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan
Planning Commission

date March 1, 1986

street & number 400 Main Avenue, Suite 400

telephone 615-521-2500

city or town Knoxville

state Tennessee

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hryca

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 9/22/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Emily Schlager
Keeper of the National Register

date 11/3/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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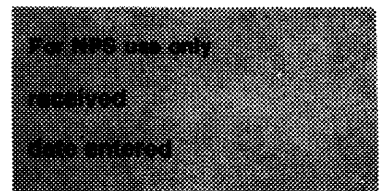
date entered

Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial Item number 8 Page 2
 Historic District

As the 20th century began, Knoxville was experiencing indications of coming economic difficulties. Manufacturers who, by their employment activities, fueled the thriving downtown district began to close in the early 1900s, largely as a result of earlier reluctance to upgrade their manufacturing equipment. The banks, which had paid unwisely large stockholder dividends in the early years of the century, were in such a precarious position by the late 1920s that they could not withstand the demands of the Depression. There were six national banks in Knoxville in the 1920s; by 1932, three had failed and the other three had vanished through mergers.

The economic hardship of Knoxville and Gay Street, exacerbated by the Depression and the downward spiral of the national economy, continued until World War II. The dwindling employment base of the early 1900s was not resuscitated. Few jobs were available, and they were low-paying ones. The city's population increase during the 1930s was less than could be expected from natural increase, an indication that many people were leaving the city in search of opportunities elsewhere.

The location of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville (one of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs) had little real effect on Knoxville's economic woes. Employment of Knoxville's was minimal, and a large staff was not present in the city in those early years. Moreover, the TVA work force in the city did little in its earliest years to generate Knoxville's economic recovery. TVA offices were usually located in pre-existing vacant buildings; their administrative staff was relatively small and not drawn from former industrial workers. However, the presence of TVA did generate enthusiasm in Knoxville's business community. This enthusiasm, probably as much a product of poorly founded optimism as real economic stimulus, is reflected in the construction of two new downtown buildings in the district. The S & W Cafeteria, previously located in the 600 block of South Gay Street, was built in 1936. With its opulent brass fixtures and wood-paneled interior, this new and spacious building quickly became the center of social gatherings for Gay Street businessmen and residents of Knoxville. Most businessmen's clubs and civic associations held their meetings there. Many business community members regularly had their morning coffee at the S & W Cafeteria and used that time for exchanging political and business information; this trend continued until the Cafeteria closed in the early 1980s. With its noontime organ concerts, the S & W Cafeteria achieved prominence as one of the most important social centers of Knoxville. Several doors north of the S & W, at 506 South Gay Street, Walgreen's was constructed in 1938. Also a reflection of the expected prosperity to come from TVA, the drug store and its soda fountain and lunch counter quickly became a gathering place for workers and visitors to other businesses located on the street. The businessmen who had morning coffee at the S & W often met at Walgreen's in the afternoon. These were the last two buildings constructed on Gay Street until the 1950s.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 8 Page 3

The Gay Street Commercial Historic District draws its significance from a seventy-year period of Knoxville's commercial and architectural evolution. Several of the buildings in the district are among the best local representations of prevailing national architectural trends. For example, the S & W Cafeteria Building (516-518 South Gay Street) is apparently the only multi-colored terra cotta clad structure in the city, and one of the best representations of Art Deco styling. Another Art Deco building in this district, the Walgreen Building at 506 South Gay Street, is distinctive for its bas-relief mortar and pestle design on the cornice, and appears to be one of the few remaining downtown buildings bearing the symbolic representation of its original commercial use. Some buildings in the district reflect, in their exuberant Victorian Vernacular Commercial architecture, the optimistic economic expectations of Knoxville in the 1890s and early 1900s. Examples include the Haynes-Henson (Century) Building at 312-314 South Gay Street with its stained glass, terra cotta, and limestone ornamentation and the Arnold, Henegar, Doyle, and Company Building at 428 South Gay Street, characterized by its arched windows and brick corbeling. Two examples of Classical Revival design are the Cullen and Newman Queensware Building at 418 South Gay Street and the W. W. Woodruff Hardware Company Building at 424 South Gay Street. Both buildings are embellished with Classical columns or pilasters, brackets, and metal cornices.

Other buildings of distinctive architecture include the Holston National Bank (NR-1979) at 531 South Gay Street, and the Knoxville Journal & Tribune Arcade at 618-620 South Gay Street, both noteworthy local examples of Classical Revival styling, and the Mechanic's Bank and Trust Building (NR-1983) at 612 South Gay Street, an outstanding example of Second Renaissance Revival design. Another Second Renaissance Revival example in the district, the Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater (NR-1983), is significant not only for its architectural detailing, but also for its prominence in Knoxville's entertainment and social life.

In the 1960s, downtown businesses concerned about their reduced commercial activity, formed the Downtown Knoxville Association (DKA). In cooperation with the city, DKA completed a project called the Gay Way, which included resurfacing sidewalks on Gay Street and the installation of metal canopies. These canopies serve to obscure the storefronts of many of the buildings included in this nomination. In addition, they are not consistent in style with the architecture of the buildings. In recent months, Knoxville and Knox County, in cooperation with many private citizens and quasi-public organizations, have been successful in having Knoxville's Gay Street selected for the Urban Demonstration Program which is an extension of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. Physical improvements are contemplated for the buildings and the street scape. One facet of the project will involve removing the canopies attached to the Gay Street buildings, combined with incentives to owners and lessees to rehabilitate their storefronts.

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Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 9 Page 2

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

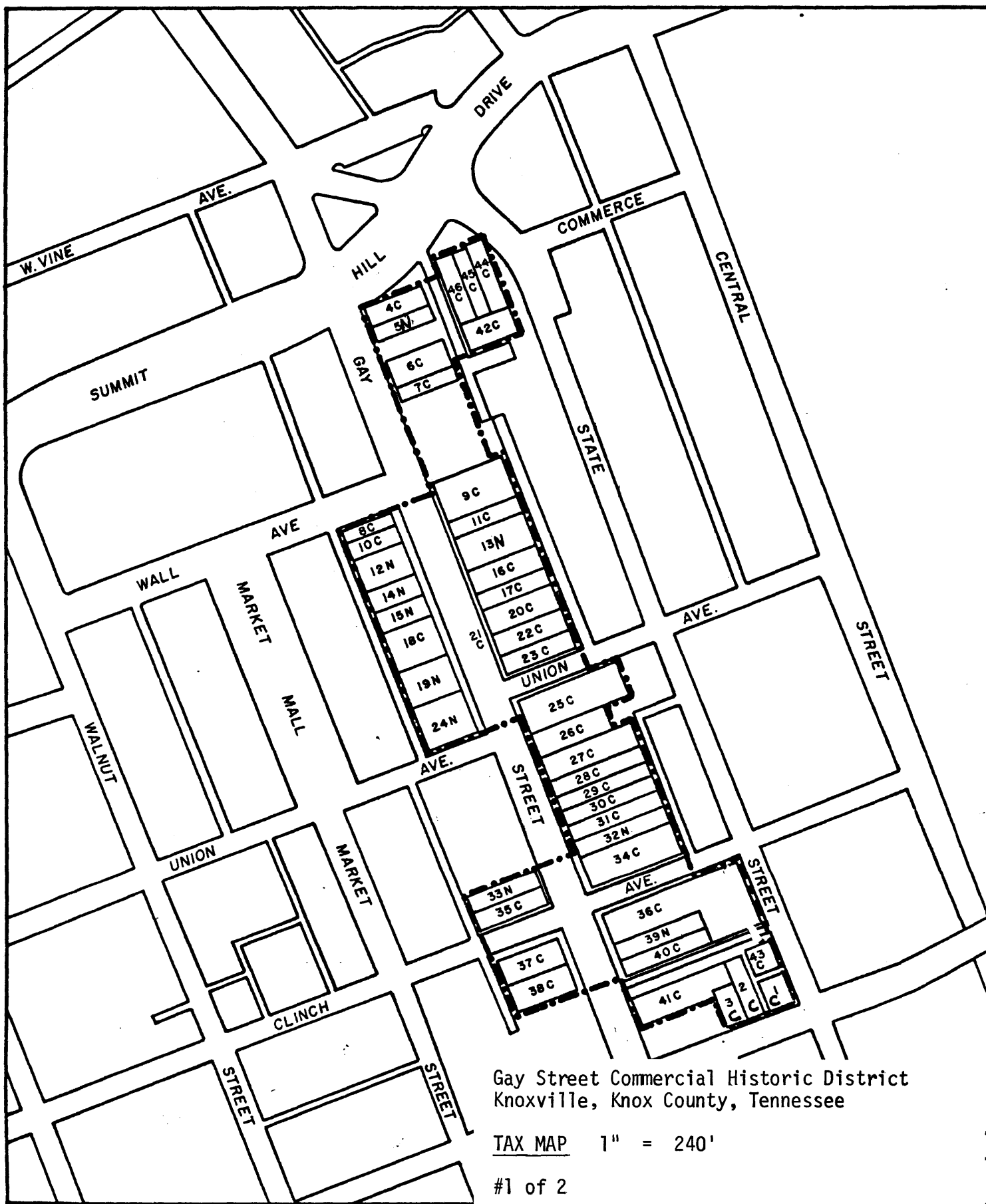
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Continuation sheet Gay Street Commercial
 Historic District Item number 10 Page 2

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The nominated district is irregular in shape and approximately thirteen acres in size. It includes properties along the east side of South Gay Street (from 300 to 618-620 South Gay Street); on the west side of South Gay Street (from 401 to 439 and 525-527 to 607-609 South Gay Street); on the south side of Summit Hill Drive (200-202, 204, and 206 Summit Hill Drive); on the south side of West Church Street (201, 209, and 211 West Church Street); and on the west side of State Street (311-313 and 615 State Street). The district boundaries are drawn to include buildings of compatible style and development which reflect the economic history of downtown Knoxville. Property outside the district is either vacant or occupied by buildings of vastly different age and architectural character. (See maps)



GAY STREET COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

C = contributing
N = non-contributing
V = vacant

